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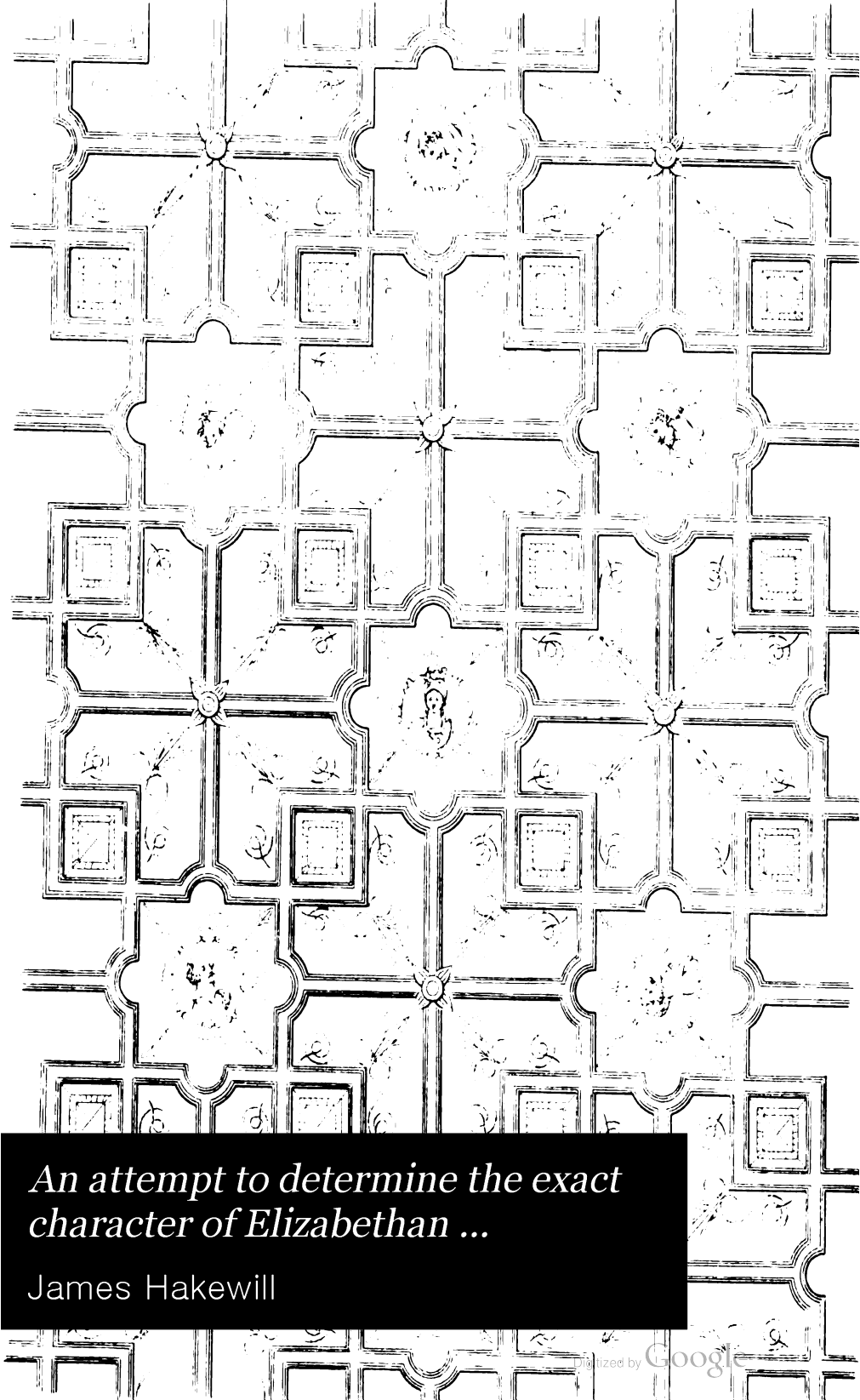

An attempt to determine the exact character of Elizabethan ...

James Hakewill

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Lakewill

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AN ATTEMPT

TO

DETERMINE THE EXACT CHARACTER

OF

ELIZABETHAN

ARCHITECTURE,

ILLUSTRATED BY PARALLELS OF

DORTON HOUSE, HATFIELD, LONGLEATE,

AND

WOLLATON, IN ENGLAND;

AND THE

PALAZZO DELLA CANCELLARIA, AT ROME.

By JAMES HAKEWILL, Architect,

AUTHOR OF THE 'PICTURESQUE TOUR OF ITALY.'

Second Edition with Additions.

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TO

CHARLES SPENCER RICKETTS, Esq.,

OF DORTON HOUSE, BUCKS,

THIS ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE THE

CHARACTER OF ELIZABETHAN ARCHITECTURE,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY HIS OBLIGED AND HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

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HAKEWILL

ON

ELIZABETHAN

ARCHITECTURE.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The gratifying demand for a second edition of the following pages allows the Author an opportunity of confirming the theory he has advanced, that the Elizabethan Architecture (considering that definition as intended to mark the character of building of the period) *is the Roman, on its early introduction into England.* It has on that account been remarked, that, as described by the author, it should rather be called the Italian, and to that reasoning he would willingly assent, had not a classification been elsewhere adopted, which an examination of date and style will prove to be incorrect. If right in denying to the character of Elizabethan, the pointed and enriched gables and ornamented chimnies, of a much earlier period, the exact copies of East Basham, Norfolk; West Stow Hall, Suffolk; or the College of Eton, Bucks; all of them of the time of Henrys VII. and VIII., the Author cannot but consider it equally correct to refuse to that appel-

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lation the grotesque and barbarous forms which, at a later period, overspread the original designs. These strange and extravagant distortions are rather of the time of James I. and subsequent reigns, to which period the staircase at Crewe Hall and Hatfield, Herriot's Hospital, Edinburgh, and other similar compositions, may be assigned.

The question as to our possession, or rather our non-possession, of a *national* Architecture, appears now to be settled. We have successively followed the example of the Germans, the Italians, and the Greeks,—the first, the importation of times of rude society and monkish seclusion; the second, the introduction (from the source from which alone it could at that time be drawn) of reviving taste for elegance and learning among us; the last the result of every combination of fortunate circumstances;—the power given to our artists and the wealthy members of our community to visit the classic shores of Greece, and to those at home to improve their taste by the frequent contemplation of portions of Grecian buildings at the British Museum. That these united causes will have the effect of establishing their constant preference for all public buildings is the hope and confident expectation of the Author of these pages.

2, Porchester Place, Connaught Square.

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AN ATTEMPT

TO

DETERMINE THE EXACT CHARACTER

OF

ELIZABETHAN ARCHITECTURE.

" Observation continuelle est le premier devoir de l'Architecte, l'application judicieuse des modèles qui s'offrent à ses yeux et les combinaisons dans des formes nouvelles, la connaissance approfondie de tous les monumens des peuples anciens et modernes lui imposent la tâche d'un travail constant et soutenu."—ESSAI SUR L'HISTOIRE GENERALE ET L'ARCHITECTURE, PAR J. G. LEGRAND.

THE quotation with which this short memoir is headed, applies to the present era with peculiar force. By the researches of our age, the ancient and modern worlds of art have been rendered familiar, and have presented us with so many varied styles of architecture, from which public bodies or individuals will select, as their good taste, prejudice, or caprice may dictate. An acquaintance with classical models acquired by foreign travel, the taste generated in academic seclusion, a residence on the banks of the Ganges or the shores of the Dardanelles, will have its effect in determining the adoption of a particular style, while the date of the crea-

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tion of a powerful family or fortune may, in the contemplated erection of a mansion, have recommended the architecture of that period to the heirs of its honours.

From these circumstances, in their endless combinations, we have an architecture as varied as the causes which originated it, and the study of the Architect should be directed to the maintenance of the purity of each, and to the preservation of its legitimate and characteristic features.

The following plates are given to the public in the endeavour to fix some general rules for the style of architecture, that began to prevail in this country about the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, which is known with us as the Elizabethan, and to relieve it from the barbarisms with which it has been overloaded.

The style from which it took its rise originated with the revival of architecture in Italy, and is known in the history of Italian art as the Cinque Cento. In that country, the abandonment of the pointed arch and the resumption of the ancient orders first began; and the Palazzo della Cancellaria, erected in 1495, and the Palazzo Giraudi, erected in 1504, by Bramante, at Rome, are beautiful examples of its adaptation. It was likewise very much employed on smaller works, as tombs and monuments, and several churches are enriched with beautiful specimens of its best style. Of these, the monuments of Galeazzo Visconti in the Certosa of

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Pavia; of Marcantonio Mantinengo in the chapel of the Reformati at Brescia; and of the Bonzi family in the church of St. Gregorio at Rome, are among the most celebrated.

From Italy it was introduced into England, superseding the domestic Gothic; was adopted by Inigo Jones, in the palace at Whitehall, and became the prevailing character of building, until the introduction of the more massy column, "a single colossal order, spanning the whole edifice."

But in England, where the Gothic had so long obtained, it could scarcely be expected but that some portions of that style would insinuate itself into designs, which, though probably composed and in part executed by Italians, must, in many instances, have been entrusted to the superintendence of native artists. These are, however, exceptions to the true character of the style, which admits *no feature of Gothic* into its composition: its elements are entirely drawn from Roman examples, and every moulding is essentially Roman in its curvature.

Among the most celebrated mansions erected in England, in the above-named style and period, and which now exist, are Longleate in Wiltshire, Wollaton Hall in Nottinghamshire, parts of Hatfield House, in Hertfordshire, Longford Castle, Wiltshire, Audley End, Essex, and Dorton House, in Buckinghamshire; while a chimney-piece in Windsor Castle, and the screens of the Middle Temple and Gray's Inn exhibit specimens of the style, as

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applied to interior decoration. These examples may be regarded as models of Elizabethan, founded on the Cinque Cento of Italy, and with no trace of the Gothic, which it superseded.

It has before been remarked that, during the passage of the public taste from the Gothic to the Italian, some portions of the former style would insinuate itself, and mar, by the unnatural conjunction, the character of each. Such examples are, however, extremely rare in England, but in more instances, the newly-introduced style would be grafted on buildings already begun: the Gothic arch and the Roman column be found in near approximation, and the characteristic ornaments of the former, and the elaborately enriched mouldings of the latter, be seen in the same building. Were our cities encumbered with the absurdities and barbarous combinations which crowd the Netherlands, the towns on the Rhine, and many parts of Normandy, we might be induced to accept that as a rule, which, with us, is only an exception; and we may take credit to our countrymen for having so sparingly introduced such barbarisms. The examples of this strange mixture, few as they are, have led to a theory that in that very mixture consisted the style of Elizabethan architecture: they are, however, only the chimera, the Sphinx of the time, an unnatural and monstrous association; should be regarded as such, and as such avoided. Their only merit is their picturesque effect. This quality is obtained in archi-

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tecture by the projections or inequalities of plan, by the deep shadows of arcades, colonnades, or porticos, by alternate and well-adjusted masses of ornament and plain surface; and, under this description, the Palais du Prince at Liege, the Castle of Heidelburg, and others, are admitted to be picturesque; but that quality is derived only from their plan. The deep shadows and broad masses of light, the irregular projections, and varied forms, give them that pictorial character, while the monstrous deformity of the columns, the barbarous design and coarse execution of the detail, add nothing to that quality. But refer to the examples of ancient Greece, or Rome, or modern Italy — the Propylea, the Erectheum, the Colonnade of St. Peter's. Here the same effect is produced, the mind is satisfied by the mass, the eye gratified by the detail: the consequence is the same pictorial character recommended by elegance of form: delicacy and correctness take the place of coarseness and distortion, and the result is harmony and repose. The reasoning of the late Author of the "Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste," has done much to consecrate another error, in proclaiming the picturesque to consist in "buildings that are mouldering into ruin, whose sharp angles are softened by decay, and whose crude and uniform tints are mellowed and diversified by weather-stains and wall-plants." But the pure and elegant models of Greece and Italy cited above, offering, as they do, the most brilliant combinations

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of light, shade, and colour, were as picturesque, and infinitely more beautiful at the time of their erection, than they are now in their decay; and while age can add no charm to such a building in a pictorial point of view, it may soften down the hideous forms of antiquated barbarity, and throwing the charm of historical recollection over the evidences of bad taste and worse execution, pass that as picturesque and venerable, which has no other claim to admiration.

In endeavouring to affix a particular character to the designation of Elizabethan architecture, no notice has been taken of the villa which rises in every outskirt of the town, ornamented with finials, and pendants and carved gables. These little play-things have no one feature of Elizabethan about them: they are formed on the models of English domestic architecture, common to every old town; a character of building which dates from the earliest period, and was the common style of house both in town and country. The theory which these observations would establish is, that *the pure Elizabethan is the Cinque Cento of Italy*, unmixed with Gothic forms or Gothic enrichments; and an attentive observation of the examples will afford the reader sufficient data on which to form his own opinion.

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE STYLE.

The style of Architecture under our immediate consideration was introduced into England about the latter end of Elizabeth. It originated somewhat earlier in Italy, and was superseded about the middle of the 16th century, by the designs of Michael Angelo, Palladio, Peruzzi, and Fontana. Having its origin in the study of the remains of Roman magnificence, it, in its turn, gave way to the employment of the same elements in larger masses under Michael Angelo and his followers.*

In England, its existence, as a prevailing style, was even more short-lived. Longleate, in Wiltshire, erected by John of Padua, in 1579, may be considered as the earliest, and the Palace of Whitehall, erected by Inigo Jones, in 1619 (which may be regarded as the perfection of its application to street architecture), as nearly the last specimen of it.

But to assist our enquiries in the endeavour to define what Elizabethan is, it may be as well to ascertain what it is *not*. It is not the ornamental gable, the bay, or oriel window, for these were all in common use long previous, as at Lincoln's Inn

* "Its characteristic, and rather minute arrangement gave way to the *grandiose* style of Michael Angelo: for the small orders, each only the height of a single story, accumulated over each other, he substituted a single colossal order, spanning the whole edifice; and the light and fanciful embroidery of arabesques, thus far exhibited every where, he banished entirely, as childish and frivolous."—HOPE.

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and the Temple Halls, Christ Church, Oxford, and many other Colleges at both the Universities: it is not the ornamental chimney shaft, nor the pendant and enriched ceiling. Our examples for the former are generally drawn from Eton College, Bucks; Compton Wyniate, Warwickshire; Gifford's Hall, Suffolk, erected half a century before the appearance of the style under consideration. Having from these unquestionable data, determined what it is not, we may the more easily determine what it is: for had nothing more appeared on the buildings of the day than we have just recited, the name of Gothic or Tudor Architecture would have amply described it.

But about this time a style new to the English eye appeared, and the earliest specimens of it were so elegant in the general arrangement, and so delicate, yet effective, in their detail, that it was certain of the approval of men of taste and judgment. The inadequacy of our artists to execute the designs of the Italians, and the difficulty and expense of procuring foreign assistance, soon originated an imitation which the abilities of our workmen *could* execute; and thus the Elizabethan may be classed under two divisions; the first, or proper, being the Cinque Cento of Italy, as introduced at Longleate, and part of Hatfield;* the second, or lower order, that in which, as far as possible, the same forms were observed, but the decoration and enrichment

* Robinson's Hatfield House, atlas folio, a very finely engraved work.

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confined to such figures as the common mason or joiner could execute, as at Wollaton, Dorton, and many others. If, however, the Cinque Cento, though adopted by the genius of Bramante, and recommended by the talent of John Pisano, Donatello, and Ghiberti, should have given place to the overwhelming influence of Michael Angelo, and succeeding Architects, how much more was it to be expected that with us, where, whenever the accessories of sculpture were employed, the design was overloaded with unmeaning or disgusting forms, it should have disappeared under the same desire (however inappropriate to private houses) of increasing the diameter of the column by giving it the whole height of the edifice.

In the staircases of Hatfield House and Crewe Hall, on the screen of the Middle Temple* and the ornamental portions of Heriot's Hospital,† Edin-

---

* Very neatly drawn and engraved by Mr. Turner, Member of the Architectural Society, folio.

† How much have the inhabitants of Edinburgh to regret that the trustees of Heriot's Hospital should have ventured to alter the designs of Inigo Jones. Commenced in 1628, ten years after the brilliant display of his talents in the designs for the palace at Whitehall, how superior must they have been to the puerile conceit of the existing buildings, the original designs for which were altered to suit their (the trustees) particular notions. With just as much reason might the heads of other professions submit their compositions to the correction of the Architect, as that the latter should be called upon to set aside his designs, the result of long study and experience at the dictation of persons whose eminence in their own professions must almost guarantee their ignorance on architectural compositions.

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burgh, contortion and grimace supply the place of elegance and expression, while monsters and chimeras in lieu of the statues of almost antique beauty which enrich the Italian model, render that ridiculous which they were meant to adorn.

But although the good and the bad, the elegant and the coarse are thus mingled, assuredly we must give the preférence to that style which the improving character of the times introduced; and although our native artists were incompetent to carry out its details, and enrich their copies of it, as it is to be wished they could have done, still the barbarous imitation must not be confounded with the style itself.

Dallaway in his observations on English Architecture, page 106, says "John of Padua succeeded him (Holbein) in the *mixed* style, and built the palace of the Protector Somerset, and Longleate for his Secretary, Sir John Thynne, and with the same ignorance, or carelessness of investigation, Pennant, in his London, calls the style of the former, 'a mixture of Grecian and Gothic;' but at that time the proportions of Greek art were scarcely known, and had not been adopted, and a reference to the large mezzotinto print published by Moss, 1777, will show that, as at Longleate, the arrangement and detail were purely Roman."

A grant was made to John of Padua, by Henry the Eighth, and renewed in the 3d year of Edward the Sixth, in which he is described as *devizor of his Majesty's buildings*: and Walpole in his works

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gives a copy of this grant from Rymer, dated 1544, and specifies sums paid to him.

The valuable book of plans and elevations of houses erected by John Thorpe, now in the library of Sir John Soane, Professor of Architecture to the Royal Academy, and who has politely allowed an inspection of it, settles the often-disputed question of the authorship of these buildings; for had Longleate or Hatfield been designed by him, they would assuredly have found a place in the collection. The volume contains in all 280 pages, and among many others are the plans and elevations of

Buckhurst, Sussex, Earl of Dorset.

Sir Charles Danvers', Chelsea.

Woolerton (now spelt Wollaton), Sir F. Willoughby.

Burghley, *juxta* Stamford, Earl of Exeter.

Kensington (Lord Holland's), Sir Walter Cross.

Longford Castle.

Ampthill.

The plans and elevations are neatly drawn, but wherever the smallest attempt occurs at the introduction of ornament or of the human figure, it is not above the execution of the most ordinary mechanic. No principle of beauty or form appears to have guided his compositions, and the quaint learning of the time seems to have decided the form of some of his principal buildings. Thus his own residence was built in the form of the letters which are the initials of his name, and are described in the

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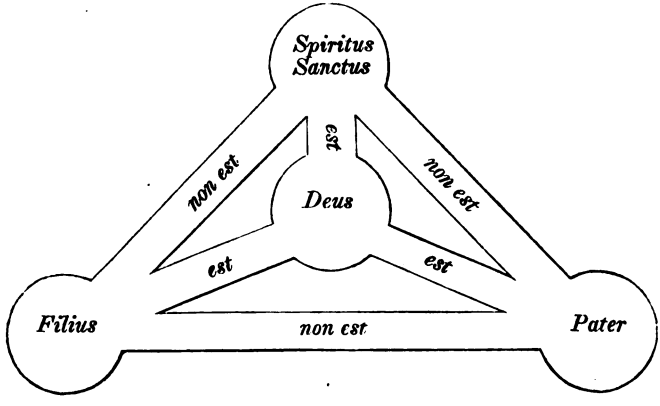
doggrel lines below, probably his own composition likewise.

These two letters, IT,
Joined together as you see,
Make a dwelling house for me.

J. THORPE.

And Longford Castle, from the same authority, was built as an emblem of the Trinity, the diagram below being placed within the larger plan—



In the buildings now erected, the projections are universally square on the plan, to admit the pilaster which terminates the angle, and the elevations are divided according to the heights of the floors, each division having a separate order, and generally its complete entablature. This arrangement was, in both instances, adopted by Inigo Jones in his palace at Whitehall, and was in general use, although Palladio had, in some instances, in order to obtain more size in the column, followed the example of Michael Angelo, and made it embrace two or more stories.

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From the time of Inigo Jones to that of Stuart, the Roman proportions were alone employed, but with the acknowledged superiority of Grecian Art, the use of that debased imitation of it, which had passed into a classical authority in the absence of better models, has been discarded. Different styles of building of original character may with propriety be employed as local circumstances may demand; but wherever such local circumstances leave a doubt, or create a hesitation, the merit of Greek Architecture, simple, yet effective—rich, but not overloaded with ornament—the type of every thing that is graceful—the perfection of all that went before it, and the school of all that has, and shall follow it, should be preferred; and it may be remarked as most favourable to the national taste, that no sooner were correct representations of Grecian Art made accessible by the Works of Stuart,* the publications of the Dillettanti Society,† and the possession of the Elgin marbles, than they became the models of study, and the object of universal imitation.

There are heresies in art as well as religion: true principles will, however, always re-establish themselves. The last century has seen the style introduced by the Adams, largely employed at the Adelphi, Sion House, and many country residences,

* Four vols. folio, a new edition in 1825, with a considerable accession of notes.

† A second edition, royal folio, published for the use of artists at 3*l.* 3*s.*

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expire with its authors; the style designated by its inventor, Emlyn, as the British, employed at Beaumont Lodge, near Windsor, and elsewhere, the existence of which was as transitory as the former. Thus has the Cinque Cento been so overloaded with barbarisms as to be scarcely recognized, and thus has the present day seen the revival of that absurd character of ornament, commonly known as the style of Lewis the Fourteenth, and we cannot better express our opinion of it than by again quoting the able work of the late Thomas Hope, an authority which we are happy to be able to avail ourselves of, and which neither the professional man nor the amateur will venture to dispute.

"Finally, as if in utter despair, some have relapsed into an admiration of the old scroll work—the old French style—of which the *French had become ashamed, and which they had rejected;* and greedily bought it up—not content with ransacking every pawnbroker's shop in London and Paris, for old buhl, old porcelain, old plate, old tapestry, and old frames, they even set every manufacturer at work, and corrupted the taste of every modern artist by the renovation of this wretched style."

It is gratifying to observe that these principles are at length taking a deep hold on the educated portions of society; and in quoting the able work of the author of the "Music of the Eye,"* we may be permitted to express a regret, that the examples

* Royal 8vo., 1830.

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which illustrate his admirably-described feelings and opinions, are so unequal to the talent and judgment he has displayed in the argument of his work.

"A second set of cognoscente we may call periodists, who blindly and inconsiderately follow such and such an old style of building, because it existed at such a period. I do not mean to find fault with those who restore an old house to its original state, though this might often be well and better avoided; but those who raise a building from the very foundation in some antiquated style, merely because they have authentic documents to show how houses were built at such a period. I have often wondered, that these sort of persons have never thought of building a house with horn windows and mud walls, which does not seem much more absurd than building a house in the style of a period when architecture was quite in its infancy, as in the Gothic, or what is called the national style; which, as it existed and had its origin mostly in the dark ages, every glaring absurdity will, no doubt, have a type, and, therefore, among the persons we are speaking of, a follower."

As bearing immediately on the subject of this short Essay, we may likewise notice the able review of Mr. Hope's work in the Quarterly of April last. From such criticisms will the public feeling towards art and architecture acquire that noble and consistent tone, from the influence of which we can alone expect productions that may do our country honour. By such decided language, the amateur will be en-

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couraged to place himself in opposition to the puerile and unmeaning forms, which ignorance or caprice have spread over some of the most conspicuous buildings of London; and the Architect will quote an authority which must be in such entire accordance with the sentiments of the best educated men of the profession.

In the endeavour to place before the public a correct notion of Elizabethan Architecture, stripped of the unmeaning and hideous forms which, in its progress, overloaded it, and of which the rapidly increasing imitations are disgracing our streets and public places, such authorities are given as appear to leave no doubt that, although adopting the elements of the Roman orders, it, from the application of them in small divisions and highly enriched compartments, may be considered as forming a style of its own, peculiarly adapted to street architecture, and which may be equally employed with the most pure simplicity or the highest degree of ornamental device.

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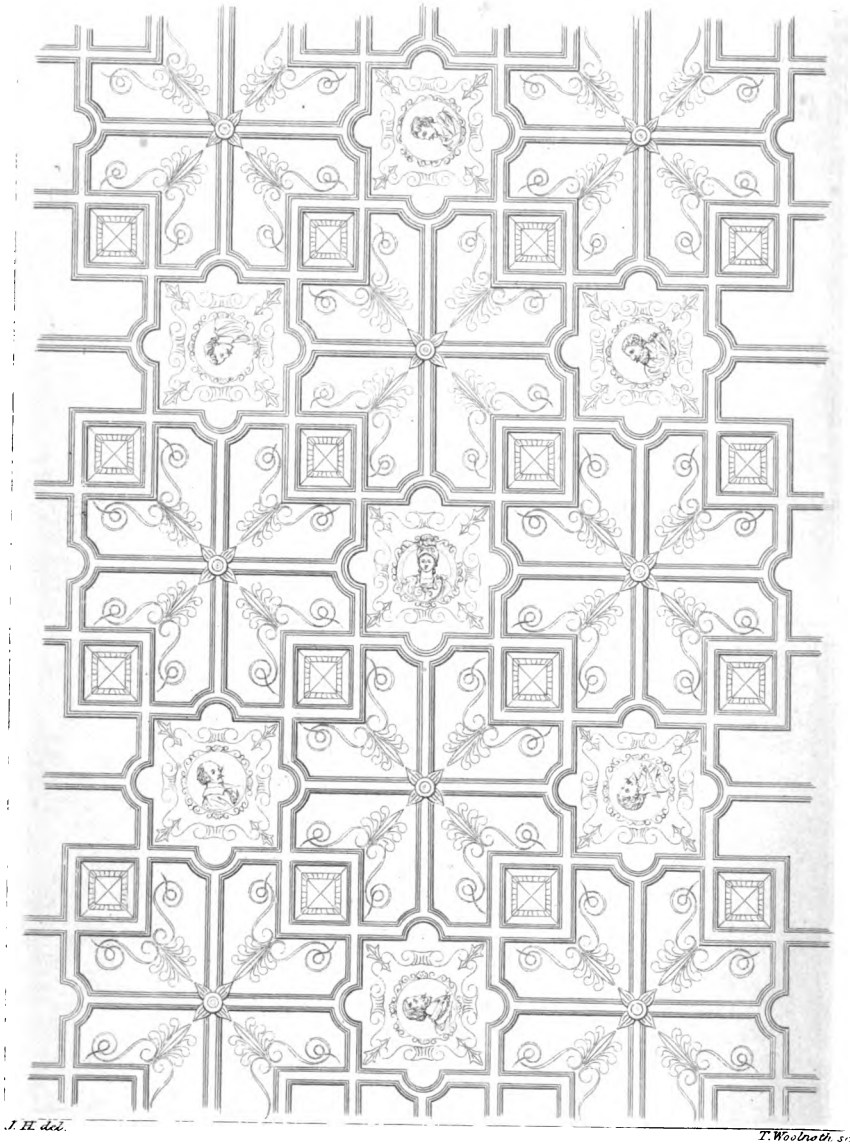

J. H. del. T. Woolnoth, Sc.

Ceiling in Queen Elizabeth's Room.

London, Published by John Weale, 59 High Holborn.

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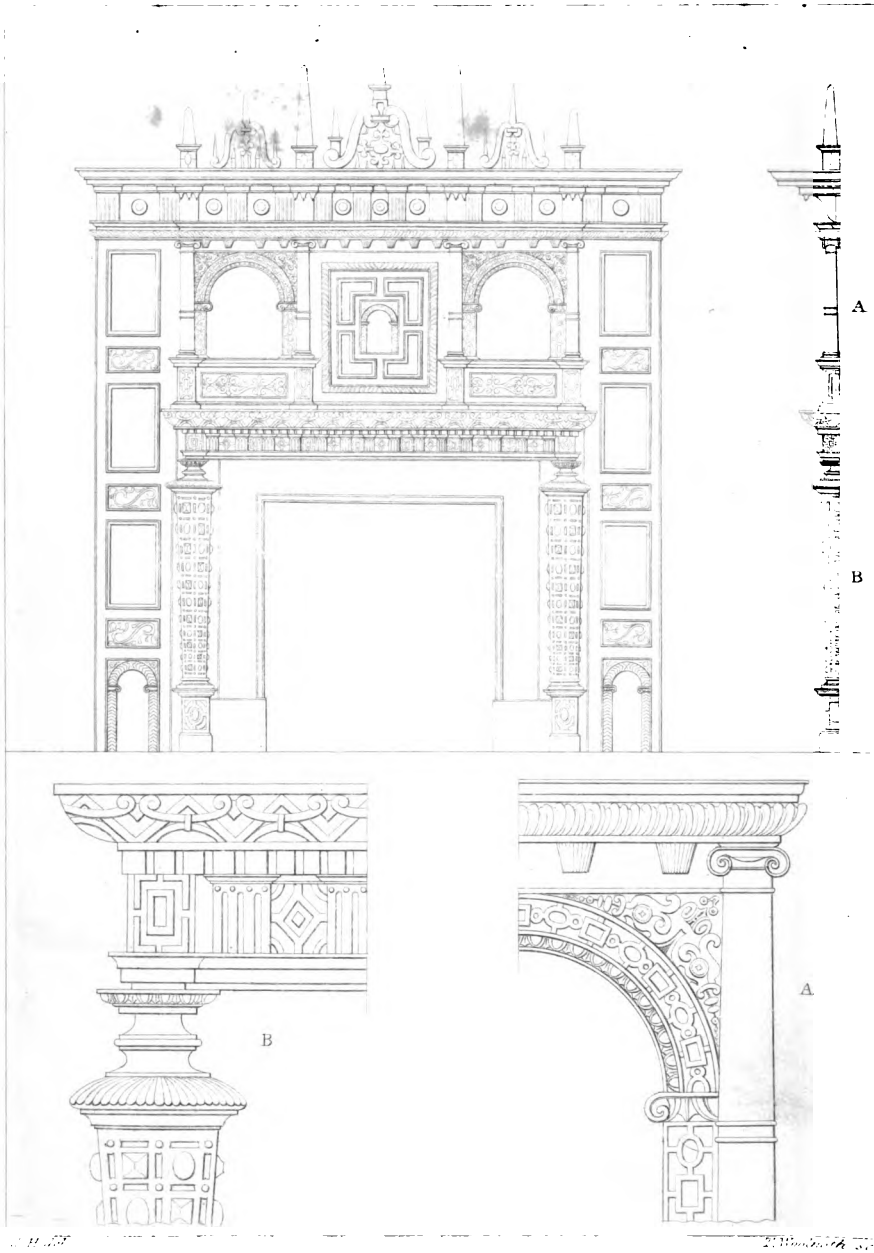

Chimney piece in Queen Elizabeths Room.

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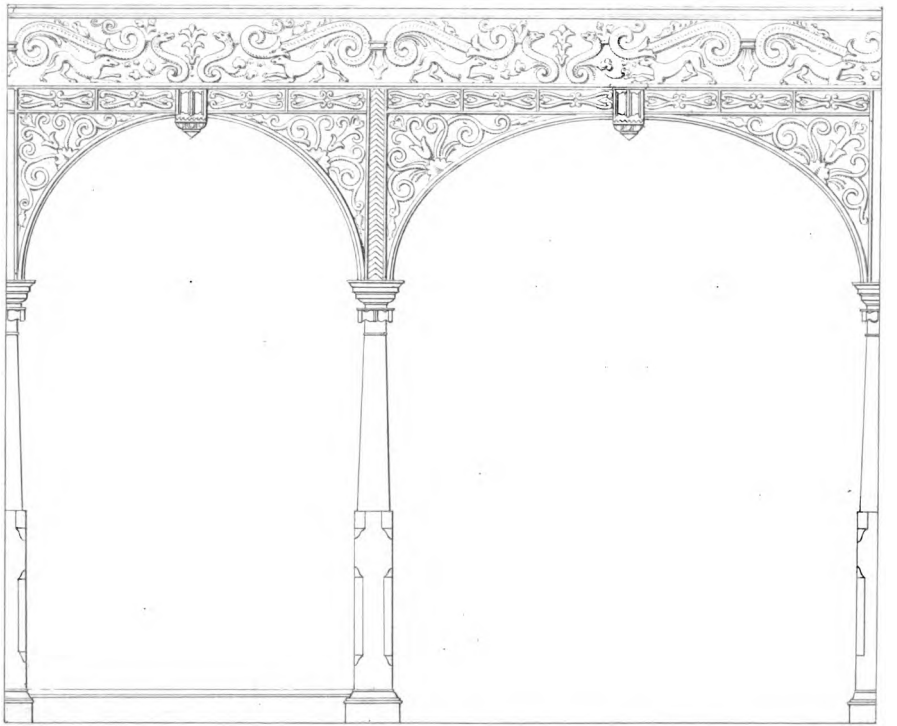

J. H. del.

Transverse Section of Staircase.

J. Roffe sc.

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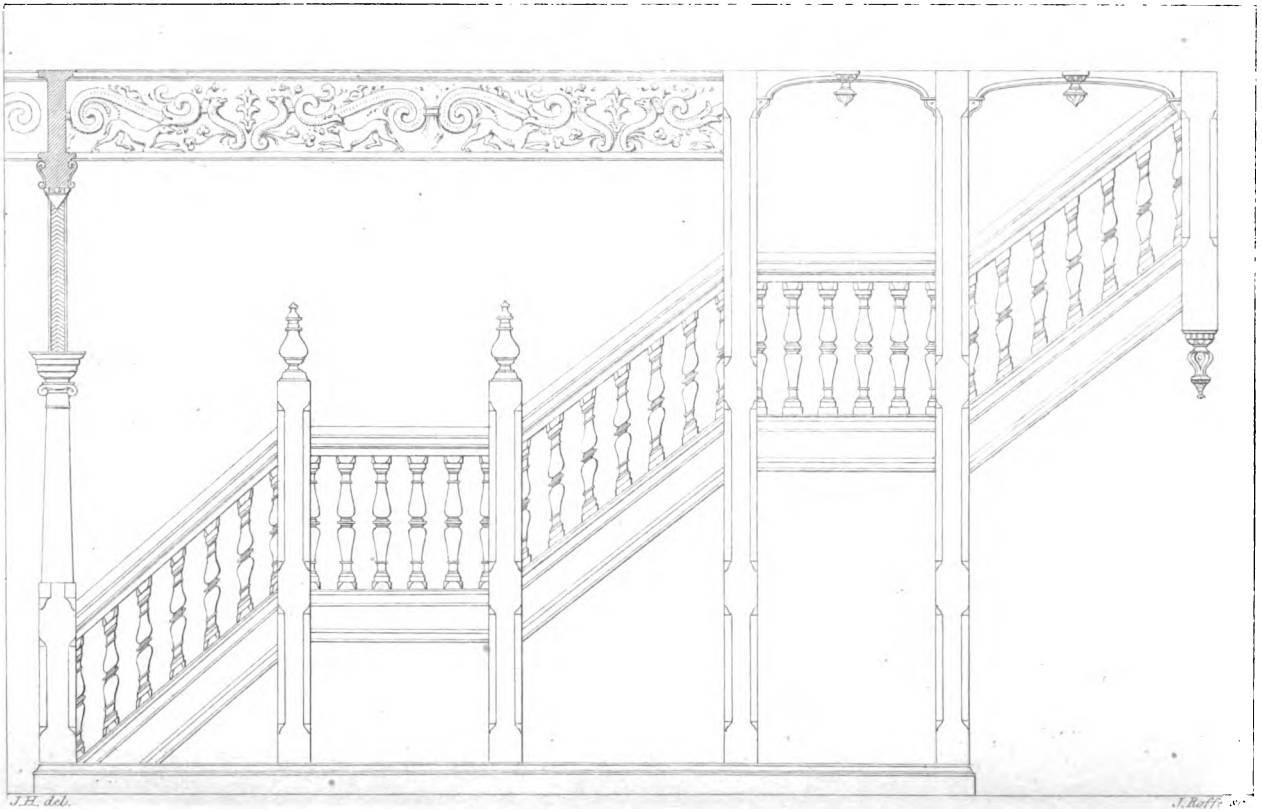

Longitudinal Section of Staircase.

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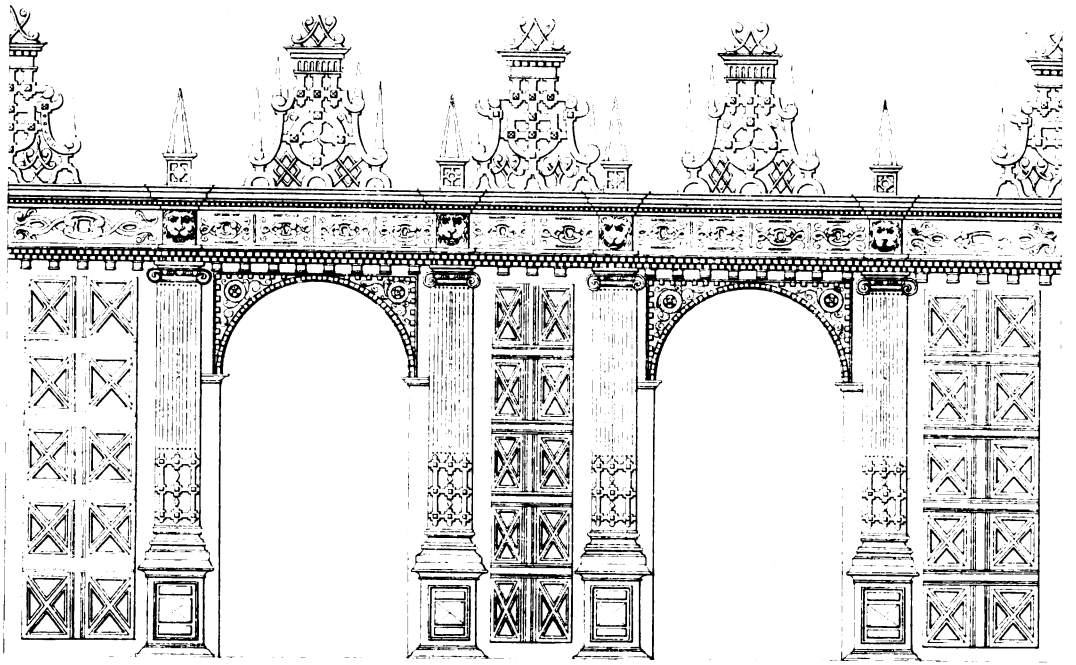

J. H. del.

T. Woolnoth sc.

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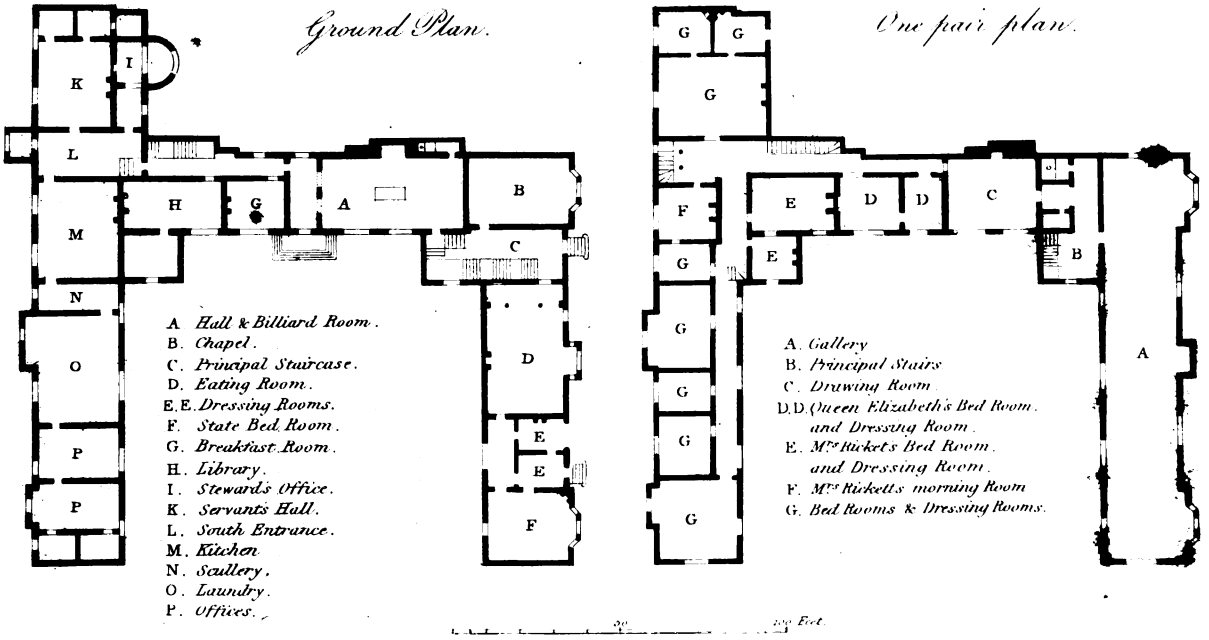
DORTON HOUSE, BUCKS.



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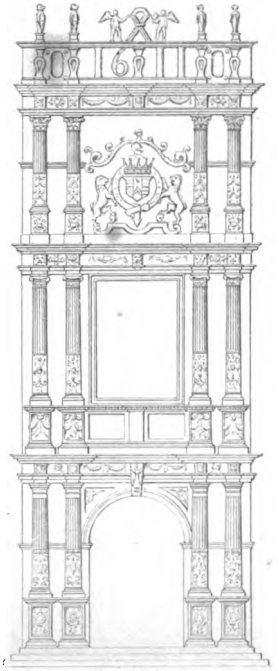
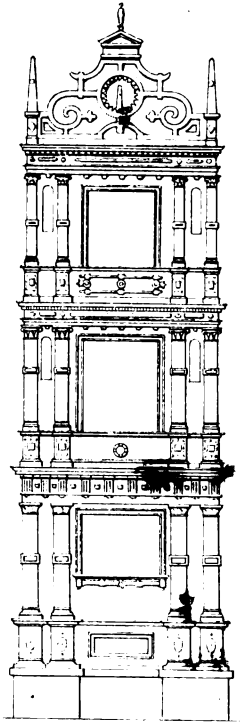


Part of Halfield House. 1611.



Wollaton Hall. by John Thorpe. 1580.

London Published by John Weale 59 High Holborn.

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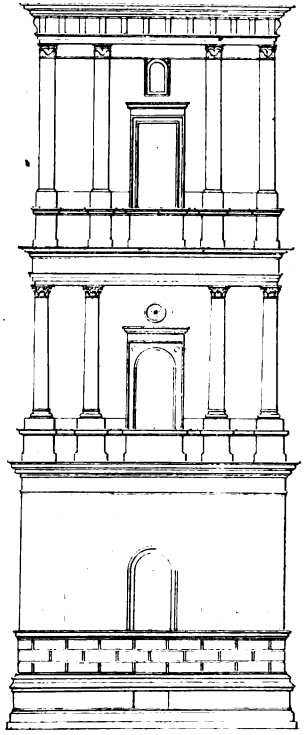
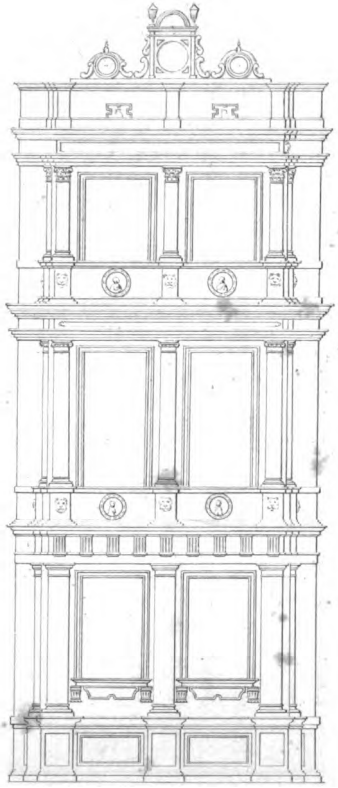


Palazzo della Cancellaria. by. Bramante. 1495.



Longleat House, by. John of Padua. 1567.

London Published by John Weale 59 High Holborn.

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EXAMPLES.

PLATE 1.—Comparison of a Compartment of the Palazzo della Cancellaria at Rome, by Bramante, 1495; and Longleate, by John of Padua, 1567.

PLATE 2.—Comparison of a Compartment of a part of the South Front of Hatfield, 1611, with a Compartment of Wollaton Hall, 1580.

The Compartment of Hatfield is taken from the receding part of the south front, and of which the architect is unknown. Its date, 1611, makes it very improbable that it was designed by John of Padua, whom we have before described as devizor of the King's (Henry VIII.) buildings, 1544; and its superiority to the known designs of that artist is an additional evidence in favour of some other professor.

PLATE 3.—Dorton House, Bucks, erected by Sir John Dormer, about the year 1596. Plan of the Ground and First Floor. Architect unknown.

PLATE 4.—Screen in the Hall.

PLATE 5.—Longitudinal section of the Staircase.

PLATE 6.—Transverse section of do.

PLATE 7.—Chimney-piece in Queen Elizabeth's room.

PLATE 8.—Ceiling of the same room. A front view of the Queen occupies the centre Compartment; the corresponding Compartments are filled with the portraits of her principal ministers in profile.

Dorton House was repaired by the late Sir John Aubrey, in 1784, when, with excessive bad taste, he destroyed the original character of the exterior, and placed a Roman Doric cornice and balustrade along the entrance front. Fortunately the interior was left untouched, and in that state it came into the possession of the present proprietor, who, in the further repairs which he found necessary, has scrupulously preserved all that remained of its originality.

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A WORD ON THE REBUILDING

THE

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

I have ventured to circulate an opinion which more reflection confirms.

In an intricate case of law, or doubtful symptoms in alarming illness, whence do we seek advice but from the experience of enlarged practice?

A plan of competition which would insure the attention of the leading men of the profession, would leave nothing to be desired, but I *fear* a general competition would not effect it, and that those professors would not enter into the struggle, or risque a fall in such a chance-medley—and thus, although the Committee may fairly select the best from the compositions *presented*, they are very far from knowing that they have *the best that could have been procured*; or, in other words, they have the best of the second class. It does appear to me that there is a medium between the extremes between which the Committee has been balancing.

Regardless of the "pressure without," were they to select a small number of the profession, and, following the example of the often justly praised, but never followed, France, pay the professors liberally for their designs, they would assuredly be able to select, after a public exhibition had given an opportunity of public criticism, a design that would defy after objection, and resist the alterations to which other buildings have been subject: they would pay a just tribute to acknowledged merit, and would leave to the rising Architect, the hope, or rather the certainty of a similar reward to his perseverance, when an occasion should again present itself.

J. H.

2, *Porchester Place, Connaught Square.*

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